

Edited by
Leticia González and Roland Lindh

Quantum Chemistry and Dynamics of Excited States

Methods and Applications

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} = \hat{H}\Psi$$



$$\hat{H}\Psi = E\Psi$$

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Edited by

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*To our families,
for their unconditional love and endless support.*

Contents

List of Contributors *xix*

Preface *xxiii*

1 Motivation and Basic Concepts 1

Sandra Gómez, Ignacio Fdez. Galván, Roland Lindh, and Leticia González

1.1 Mission and Motivation 1

1.2 Atomic Units 4

1.3 The Molecular Hamiltonian 5

1.4 Dirac or Bra-Ket Notation 6

1.5 Index Definitions 7

1.6 Second Quantization Formalism 7

1.7 Born–Oppenheimer Approximation and Potential Energy Surfaces 9

1.8 Adiabatic Versus Diabatic Representations 10

1.9 Conical Intersections 11

1.10 Further Reading 12

1.11 Acknowledgments 12

Part I Quantum Chemistry 13

2 Time-Dependent Density Functional Theory 15

Miquel Huix-Rotllant, Nicolas Ferré, and Mario Barbatti

2.1 Introduction 15

2.2 TDDFT Fundamentals 16

2.2.1 The Runge–Gross Theorems 16

2.2.2 The Time-Dependent Kohn–Sham Approach 18

2.2.3 Solutions of Time-Dependent Kohn–Sham Equations 19

2.2.3.1 Real-Time TDDFT 19

2.2.3.2 Linear-Response TDDFT 20

2.3 Linear-Response TDDFT in Action 22

2.3.1 Vertical Excitations and Energy Surfaces 22

2.3.1.1 Vertical Excitations: How Good are They? 23

2.3.1.2 Reconstructed Energy Surfaces: How Good are They? 25

2.3.2 Conical Intersections 28

2.3.3 Coupling Terms and Auxiliary Wave Functions 30

2.3.3.1	The Casida Ansatz	30
2.3.3.2	Time-Derivative Non-Adiabatic Couplings	31
2.3.4	Non-Adiabatic Dynamics	32
2.4	Excited States and Dynamics with TDDFT Variants and Beyond	34
2.5	Conclusions	35
	Acknowledgments	36
	References	36

3 Multi-Configurational Density Functional Theory: Progress and Challenges 47

Erik Donovan Hedegård

3.1	Introduction	47
3.2	Wave Function Theory	50
3.3	Kohn–Sham Density Functional Theory	50
3.3.1	Density Functional Approximations	53
3.3.2	Density Functional Theory for Excited States	54
3.3.2.1	Issues Within the Time-Dependent Density Functional Theory Ansatz	55
3.3.2.2	Self-Interaction Error	55
3.3.2.3	Degeneracies, Near-Degeneracies and the Symmetry Dilemma	56
3.4	Multi-Configurational Density Functional Theory	57
3.4.1	Semi-Empirical Multi-Configurational Density Functional Theory	57
3.4.2	Multi-Configurational Density Functional Theory Based the On-Top Pair Density	58
3.4.2.1	Density Matrices and the On-Top Pair Density	59
3.4.2.2	Energy Functional and Excited States with the On-Top Pair Density	60
3.4.3	Multi-Configurational Density Functional Theory Based on Range-Separation	61
3.4.3.1	Energy Functional and Excited States in Range-Separated Methods	62
3.4.3.2	The Range-Separation Parameter in Excited State Calculations	62
3.5	Illustrative Examples	64
3.5.1	Excited States of Organic Molecules	64
3.5.2	Excited States for a Transition Metal Complex	65
3.6	Outlook	66
	Acknowledgments	67
	References	67

4 Equation-of-Motion Coupled-Cluster Models 77

Monika Musiał

4.1	Introduction	77
4.2	Theoretical Background	79
4.2.1	Coupled-Cluster Wave Function	79
4.2.2	The Equation-of-Motion Approach	80
4.2.3	Similarity-Transformed Hamiltonian	81
4.2.4	Davidson Diagonalization Algorithm	82
4.3	Excited States: EE-EOM-CC	84
4.3.1	EE-EOM-CCSD Model	84
4.3.2	EE-EOM-CCSDT Model	86
4.3.3	EE-EOM-CC Results	87
4.4	Ionized States: IP-EOM-CC	89

4.4.1	IP-EOM-CCSD Model	89
4.4.2	IP-EOM-CCSDT Model	89
4.4.3	IP-EOM-CC Results	90
4.5	Electron-Attached States: EA-EOM-CC	91
4.5.1	EA-EOM-CCSD Model	92
4.5.2	EA-EOM-CCSDT Model	92
4.5.3	EA-EOM-CC Results	92
4.6	Doubly-Ionized States: DIP-EOM-CC	94
4.6.1	DIP-EOM-CCSD Model	95
4.6.2	DIP-EOM-CCSDT Model	95
4.6.3	DIP-EOM-CC Results	96
4.7	Doubly Electron-Attached States: DEA-EOM-CC	97
4.7.1	DEA-EOM-CCSD Model	98
4.7.2	DEA-EOM-CCSDT Model	98
4.7.3	DEA-EOM-CC Results	98
4.8	Size-Extensivity Issue in the EOM-CC Theory	100
4.9	Final Remarks	102
	References	103

5 The Algebraic-Diagrammatic Construction Scheme for the Polarization Propagator 109

Andreas Dreuw

5.1	Original Derivation via Green's Functions	110
5.2	The Intermediate State Representation	112
5.3	Calculation of Excited State Properties and Analysis	114
5.3.1	Excited State Properties	114
5.3.2	Excited-State Wave Function and Density Analyses	116
5.4	Properties and Limitations of ADC	117
5.5	Variants of EE-ADC	119
5.5.1	Extended ADC(2)	119
5.5.2	Unrestricted EE-ADC Schemes	120
5.5.3	Spin-Flip EE-ADC Schemes	121
5.5.4	Spin-Opposite-Scaled ADC Schemes	122
5.5.5	Core-Valence Separated (CVS) EE-ADC	123
5.6	Describing Molecular Photochemistry with ADC Methods	125
5.6.1	Potential Energy Surfaces	125
5.6.2	Environment Models within ADC	126
5.7	Brief Summary and Perspective	126
	Bibliography	127

6 Foundation of Multi-Configurational Quantum Chemistry 133

Giovanni Li Manni, Kai Guther, Dongxia Ma, and Werner Dobratz

6.1	Scaling Problem in FCI, CAS and RAS Wave Functions	136
6.2	Factorization and Coupling of Slater Determinants	138
6.2.1	Slater Condon Rules	140
6.3	Configuration State Functions	141
6.3.1	The Unitary Group Approach (UGA)	142

6.3.1.1	Analogy between CSFs and Spherical Harmonics	143
6.3.1.2	Gel'fand-Tsetlin Basis	143
6.3.1.3	Paldus and Weyl Tables	145
6.3.1.4	The Step-Vector	148
6.3.2	The Graphical Unitary Group Approach (GUGA)	148
6.3.3	Evaluation of Non-Vanishing Hamiltonian Matrix Elements	153
6.3.3.1	One-Body Coupling Coefficients	154
6.3.3.2	Two-Body Matrix Elements	157
6.4	Configuration Interaction Eigenvalue Problem	158
6.4.1	Iterative Methods	159
6.4.1.1	Lanczos Algorithm	159
6.4.1.2	Davidson Algorithm	160
6.4.2	Direct-CI Algorithm	162
6.5	The CASSCF Method	165
6.5.1	The MCSCF Parameterization	167
6.5.2	The MCSCF Gradient and Hessian	169
6.5.3	One-Step and Two-Step Procedures	170
6.5.4	Augmented Hessian Method	171
6.5.5	Matrix form of the First and Second Derivatives in MCSCF	171
6.5.6	Quadratically Converging Method with Optimal Convergence	175
6.5.7	Orbital-CI Coupling Terms	178
6.5.8	Super-CI for the Orbital Optimization	179
6.5.9	Redundancy of Active Orbital Rotations	181
6.6	Restricted and Generalized Active Space Wave Functions	182
6.6.1	GUGA Applied to CAS, RAS and GAS Wave Functions	184
6.6.2	Redundancies in GASSCF Orbital Rotations	186
6.6.3	MCSCF Molecular Orbitals	187
6.6.4	GASSCF Applied to the Gd_2 Molecule	188
6.7	Excited States	189
6.7.1	Multi-State CI Solver	190
6.7.2	State-Specific and State-Averaged MCSCF	191
6.8	Stochastic Multiconfigurational Approaches	191
6.8.1	FCIQMC Working Equation	192
6.8.2	Multi-Wave Function Approach for Excited States	196
6.8.3	Sampling Reduced Density Matrices	196
	Bibliography	198

7 The Density Matrix Renormalization Group for Strong Correlation in Ground and Excited States 205

Leon Freitag and Markus Reiher

7.1	Introduction	205
7.2	DMRG Theory	207
7.2.1	Renormalization Group Formulation	207
7.2.2	Matrix Product States and Matrix Product Operators	210
7.2.3	MPS-MPO Formulation of DMRG	214
7.2.4	Connection between the Renormalization Group and the MPS-MPO Formulation of DMRG	217

7.2.5	Developments to Enhance DMRG Convergence and Performance	218
7.3	DMRG and Orbital Entanglement	218
7.4	DMRG in Practice	220
7.4.1	Calculating Excited States with DMRG	220
7.4.2	Factors Affecting the DMRG Convergence and Accuracy	220
7.4.3	Post-DMRG Methods for Dynamic Correlation and Environment Effects	221
7.4.4	Analytical Energy Gradients and Non-Adiabatic Coupling Matrix Elements	222
7.4.5	Tensor Network States	224
7.5	Applications in Quantum Chemistry	225
7.6	Conclusions	230
	Acknowledgment	231
	References	231

8 **Excited-State Calculations with Quantum Monte Carlo** 247

Jonas Feldt and Claudia Filippi

8.1	Introduction	247
8.2	Variational Monte Carlo	249
8.3	Diffusion Monte Carlo	252
8.4	Wave Functions and their Optimization	256
8.4.1	Stochastic Reconfiguration Method	258
8.4.2	Linear Method	259
8.5	Excited States	261
8.5.1	Energy-Based Methods	261
8.5.2	Time-Dependent Linear-Response VMC	263
8.5.3	Variance-Based Methods	264
8.6	Applications to Excited States of Molecular Systems	265
8.7	Alternatives to Diffusion Monte Carlo	269
	Bibliography	270

9 **Multi-Reference Configuration Interaction** 277

Felix Plasser and Hans Lischka

9.1	Introduction	277
9.2	Basics	278
9.2.1	Configuration Interaction and the Variational Principle	278
9.2.2	The Size-Extensivity Problem of Truncated CI	280
9.2.3	Multi-Reference Configuration Spaces	282
9.2.4	Many-Electron Basis Functions: Determinants and CSFs	286
9.2.5	Workflow	287
9.3	Types of MRCI	289
9.3.1	Uncontracted and Contracted MRCI	289
9.3.2	MRCI with Extensivity Corrections	291
9.3.3	Types of Selection Schemes	293
9.3.4	Construction of Orbitals	293
9.4	Popular Implementations	294
9.5	Conclusions	295
	References	295

10	Multi-Configurational Reference Perturbation Theory with a CASSCF Reference Function	299
	<i>Roland Lindh and Ignacio Fdez. Galván</i>	
10.1	Rayleigh–Schrödinger Perturbation Theory	300
10.1.1	The Single-State Theory	300
10.1.1.1	The Conventional Projectional Derivation	300
10.1.1.2	The Bi-Variational Approach	304
10.1.2	Convergence Properties and Intruder States	308
10.1.2.1	Real and Imaginary Shift Techniques	310
10.2	Møller–Plesset Perturbation Theory	313
10.2.1	The Reference Function	314
10.2.2	The Partitioning of the Hamiltonian	315
10.2.3	The First-Order Interacting Space and Second-Order Energy Correction	316
10.3	State-Specific Multi-Configurational Reference Perturbation Methods	320
10.3.1	The Generation of the Reference Hamiltonian	321
10.3.2	CAS-MP2 Theory	322
10.3.3	CASPT2 Theory	323
10.3.3.1	The Partitioning of the Hamiltonian	324
10.3.3.2	The First-Order Interacting Space	325
10.3.3.3	Other Active Space References	328
10.3.3.4	Benchmark Results	329
10.3.3.5	IPEA Shift	330
10.3.4	MRMP2 Theory	331
10.3.4.1	The Partitioning of the Hamiltonian	331
10.3.4.2	The First-Order Interacting Space	332
10.3.5	NEVPT2 Theory	333
10.3.5.1	The Partitioning of the Hamiltonian	333
10.3.5.2	The First-Order Interacting Space	335
10.3.6	Performance Improvements	336
10.4	Quasi-Degenerate Perturbation Theory	338
10.5	Multi-State Multi-Configurational Reference Perturbation Methods	341
10.5.1	Multi-State CASPT2 Theory	341
10.5.2	Extended MS-CASPT2 Theory	342
10.6	Summary and Outlook	343
	Acknowledgments	345
	References	345
	Appendix	350

Part II Nuclear Dynamics 355

11	Exact Quantum Dynamics (Wave Packets) in Reduced Dimensionality	357
	<i>Sebastian Reiter, Daniel Keefer, and Regina de Vivie-Riedle</i>	
11.1	Introduction	357
11.2	Fundamentals of Molecular Quantum Dynamics	358
11.2.1	Wave Packet Dynamics	358

11.2.2	Time-Propagator Schemes	360
11.2.3	Excited State Wave Packet Dynamics	362
11.2.4	Surfaces and Coupling Elements in Reactive Coordinates	362
11.3	Choice of Dynamical Coordinates and Hamiltonian in Reduced Dimensionality	364
11.3.1	Manual Selection by Chemical Intuition	364
11.3.2	The <i>G</i> -Matrix Formalism	365
11.3.2.1	General Setup	366
11.3.2.2	Practical Computation of the <i>G</i> -Matrix Elements	367
11.3.2.3	Photorelaxation of Uracil in Linear Reactive Coordinates	367
11.3.3	Automatic Generation of Linear Coordinates	369
11.3.3.1	IRC Based Approach	369
11.3.3.2	Trajectory-Based Approach	371
11.3.3.3	Comparison of Both Techniques for Linear Subspaces	372
11.3.4	Automatic Generation of Non-Linear Coordinates	374
11.4	Summary and Further Remarks	378
	References	379

12 Multi-Configuration Time-Dependent Hartree Methods: From Quantum to Semiclassical and Quantum-Classical 383

M. Bonfanti, G. A. Worth, and I. Burghardt

12.1	Introduction	383
12.2	Time-Dependent Variational Principle and MCTDH	385
12.2.1	Variational Principle and Tangent Space Projections	385
12.2.2	MCTDH: Variational Multi-Configurational Wave Functions	386
12.2.2.1	MCTDH Wave Function <i>Ansatz</i>	386
12.2.2.2	MCTDH Equations of Motion	388
12.2.3	ML-MCTDH: Hierarchical Representations	389
12.3	Gaussian-Based MCTDH	390
12.3.1	G-MCTDH and vMCG	390
12.3.1.1	G-MCTDH Wave Function <i>Ansatz</i>	391
12.3.1.2	G-MCTDH Equations of Motion	392
12.3.1.3	vMCG Equations of Motion	393
12.3.2	2L-GMCTDH	394
12.3.2.1	Wave Function <i>Ansatz</i>	394
12.3.2.2	Equations of Motion	395
12.4	Quantum-Classical Multi-Configurational Approaches	396
12.4.1	Quantum-Classical Limit of G-MCTDH	396
12.4.2	Quantum-Classical Scheme with Finite-Width Wave Packets	398
12.4.3	Related Approaches	399
12.5	How to use MCTDH & Co	399
12.6	Synopsis and Application to Donor-Acceptor Complex	400
12.6.1	Hamiltonian, Spectral Densities, and Potential Surfaces	400
12.6.2	Ultrafast Coherent Charge Transfer Dynamics	402
12.6.3	Comparison of Methods	403
12.7	Conclusions and Outlook	405
	Acknowledgments	406
	References	406

13 Gaussian Wave Packets and the DD-vMCG Approach 413*Graham A. Worth and Benjamin Lasorne*

- 13.1 Historical Background 413
- 13.2 Basic Theory 415
 - 13.2.1 Gaussian Wave Packets 415
 - 13.2.2 General Equations of Motion 418
 - 13.2.2.1 Coefficients and Parameters 418
 - 13.2.2.2 CX-Formalism 419
 - 13.2.2.3 Nuclear and Electronic Degrees of Freedom 420
 - 13.2.2.4 Variational Multi-Configurational Gaussian Approach 422
 - 13.3 Example Calculations 424
 - 13.4 Tunneling Dynamics: Salicylaldimine 425
 - 13.5 Non-Adiabatic Dynamics: The Butatriene Cation 426
 - 13.6 Direct Non-Adiabatic Dynamics: Formamide 428
 - 13.7 Summary 431
 - 13.8 Practical Implementation 431
 - Acknowledgments 431
 - References 431

14 Full and *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning 435*Basile F. E. Curchod*

- 14.1 Introduction 435
- 14.2 Time-Dependent Molecular Schrödinger Equation in a Gaussian Basis 436
 - 14.2.1 Central Equations of Motion 436
 - 14.2.2 Dynamics of the Trajectory Basis Functions 439
- 14.3 Full Multiple Spawning 440
 - 14.3.1 Full Multiple Spawning Equations 440
 - 14.3.2 Spawning Algorithm 442
 - 14.4 Extending Full Multiple Spawning 443
 - 14.4.1 External Field in Full Multiple Spawning 444
 - 14.4.2 Spin-Orbit Coupling in Full Multiple Spawning 445
 - 14.5 *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning 447
 - 14.5.1 From Full- to *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning 447
 - 14.5.2 Testing the Approximations of *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning 449
 - 14.5.3 On-the-Fly *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning 450
 - 14.5.4 *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning versus Trajectory Surface Hopping 451
 - 14.6 Dissecting an *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning Dynamics 454
 - 14.6.1 The Different Steps of an *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning Dynamics 454
 - 14.6.2 Example of *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning Dynamics – the Photo-Chemistry of Cyclohexadiene 455
 - 14.7 *In Silico* Photo-Chemistry with *Ab Initio* Multiple Spawning 459
 - 14.8 Summary 462
 - 14.9 References 463

15 Ehrenfest Methods for Electron and Nuclear Dynamics 469*Adam Kirrander and Morgane Vacher*

- 15.1 Introduction 469
- 15.2 Theory of the (Simple) Ehrenfest Method 470

15.2.1	Wave Function Ansatz	471
15.2.2	Equations of Motion	472
15.3	Theory of the Multi-Configurational Ehrenfest Method	474
15.3.1	Wave Function Ansatz	474
15.3.2	Equations of Motion	476
15.3.3	Computational Aspects	479
15.4	Applications	480
15.4.1	Coupled Electron and Nuclear Dynamics Upon Sudden Ionization	481
15.4.2	Ultrafast Scattering as a Probe of Nuclear Dynamics	485
15.5	Conclusion	490
	References	491

16 Surface Hopping Molecular Dynamics 499

Sebastian Mai, Philipp Marquetand, and Leticia González

16.1	Introduction	499
16.2	Basics of Surface Hopping	500
16.2.1	Advantages and Disadvantages	500
16.2.2	General Algorithm	501
16.3	Surface Hopping Ingredients	503
16.3.1	Nuclear Motion	503
16.3.2	Wave Function Propagation	504
16.3.3	Decoherence	505
16.3.4	Surface Hopping Algorithm	507
16.3.5	Kinetic Energy Adjustment and Frustrated Hops	509
16.3.6	Coupling Terms and Representations	511
16.4	Practical Remarks	513
16.4.1	Choice of the Electronic Structure Method	513
16.4.2	Initial Conditions	516
16.4.3	Example Application and Trajectory Analysis	518
16.5	Popular Implementations	521
16.6	Conclusion and Outlook	522
	Acknowledgments	522
	References	522

17 Exact Factorization of the Electron–Nuclear Wave Function: Theory and Applications 531

Federica Agostini and E. K. U. Gross

17.1	Introduction	531
17.2	The Time-Dependent Molecular Problem in the Exact-Factorization Formulation	533
17.2.1	Wave Function Ansatz	533
17.2.2	Equations of Motion	535
17.3	The Born–Oppenheimer Framework and the Exact Factorization	536
17.3.1	One-Dimensional Case: Time-Dependent Potential Energy Surface	538
17.3.2	Two-Dimensional Case: Time-Dependent Potential Energy Surface and Time-Dependent Vector Potential	542
17.4	Trajectory-Based Solution of the Exact-Factorization Equations	545
17.4.1	CT-MQC: The Approximations	546
17.4.2	CT-MQC: Photo-Induced Ring Opening in Oxirane	549

17.4.3	CT-MQC: The Algorithm	551
17.5	The Molecular Berry Phase	553
17.6	Conclusions	556
	Acknowledgments	556
	References	556
18	Bohmian Approaches to Non-Adiabatic Molecular Dynamics	563
	<i>Guillermo Albareda and Ivano Tavernelli</i>	
18.1	Introduction	563
18.2	A Practical Overview of Bohmian Mechanics	565
18.2.1	The Postulates	565
18.2.2	Computation of Bohmian Trajectories	566
18.2.2.1	Trajectories from the Schrödinger Equation	566
18.2.2.2	Trajectories from the Hamilton–Jacobi Equation	567
18.2.2.3	Trajectories from a Complex Action	568
18.2.3	Computation of Expectation Values	569
18.3	The Born–Huang Picture of Molecular Dynamics	569
18.3.1	The Molecular Schrödinger Equation in Position Space	569
18.3.2	Schrödinger Equation in the Born–Huang Basis	570
18.3.2.1	The Born–Oppenheimer Approximation: The Adiabatic Case	571
18.3.2.2	Non-Adiabatic Dynamics	572
18.4	BH-Based Approaches	573
18.4.1	The Non-Adiabatic Bohmian Dynamics Equations (NABDY)	573
18.4.2	Implementation in Molecular Dynamics: The Adiabatic Case	575
18.4.3	The Approximate Quantum Potential Approach	577
18.5	Non-BH Approaches	579
18.5.1	The Conditional Wave Function Approach	579
18.5.1.1	Hermitian Conditional Wave Function Approach	581
18.5.2	The Interacting Conditional Wave Function Approach	582
18.5.3	Time-Dependent Quantum Monte Carlo	585
18.6	Conclusions	588
	References	589
19	Semiclassical Molecular Dynamics for Spectroscopic Calculations	595
	<i>Riccardo Conte and Michele Ceotto</i>	
19.1	Introduction	595
19.2	From Feynman’s Path Integral to van Vleck’s Semiclassical Propagator	598
19.3	The Semiclassical Initial Value Representation and the Heller–Herman–Kluk–Kay Formulation	601
19.4	A Derivation of the Heller–Herman–Kluk–Kay Propagator	603
19.5	The Time-Averaging Filter	604
19.6	The Multiple Coherent States SCIVR	606
19.7	The “Divide-and-Conquer” SCIVR	610
19.8	Mixed SCIVR Dynamics: Towards Semiclassical Spectroscopy in Condensed Phase	615
19.9	Semiclassical Spectroscopy Workflow	618
19.10	A Taste of Semiclassical Spectroscopy	619

19.11	Summary and Conclusions	622
	Acknowledgments	624
	Bibliography	624

20	Path-Integral Approaches to Non-Adiabatic Dynamics	629
	<i>Maximilian A. C. Saller, Johan E. Runeson, and Jeremy O. Richardson</i>	
20.1	Introduction	629
20.2	Semiclassical Theory	631
20.2.1	Mapping Approach	631
20.2.2	Linearized Semiclassical Dynamics	632
20.3	Non-Equilibrium Dynamics	633
20.3.1	Spin-Boson Systems	634
20.3.2	Non-Equilibrium Correlation Functions	636
20.4	Non-Adiabatic Path-Integral Theory	640
20.4.1	Mean-Field Path-Integral Sampling	640
20.4.2	Non-Adiabatic Ring-Polymer Molecular Dynamics	641
20.4.3	Alleviation of the Negative Sign	644
20.4.4	Practical Implementation of Monte Carlo Sampling	644
20.5	Equilibrium Correlation Functions	646
20.6	Conclusions	648
	Acknowledgments	649
	References	649

Index	655
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Preface

Light is not everything, but without light there would not be life as we know it. For good reasons, the sun has been venerated in most ancient civilizations as a god. It has a powerful light and affects our lives on a daily basis. Light drives, controls, or is generated in numerous chemical reactions in nature. It is responsible for processes as essential as vision or photosynthesis, is part of the enchanting phenomena which is bioluminescence but can also be detrimental, such as causing skin damage. Its power has been exploited by mankind since earliest times, not only to heat but to heal, e.g., treating epidermal conditions, to name just one example. Today, sunlight is the hope for providing clean renewable energies. The ways in which the benefits of light can be harnessed go beyond the boundaries of chemistry, into physics, biology and medicine.

Driven by curiosity and interest, many researchers have been fascinated in understanding how light interacts with molecules as only then light can be rationally exploited in many applications. Theory is particular useful for this endeavor, as it allows many details, which are often invisible in experiments, to be disentangled. This particular research field, that could be termed as theoretical photochemistry, took off in the early nineties. Thus, the field is not new but there is still much room for further developments. When a molecule receives a photon of light, its energy changes, or in the language of quantum mechanics, it gets electronically excited. Thus, the computational study of electronic excited states requires the inclusion of quantum effects (at least in part) and this makes it still a challenging problem today except for the smallest molecules. However, recent years have witnessed an explosion of methods able to tackle the study of electronic states and its evolution in time in many different ways. This expansion has been accompanied by thousands of publications dealing with applications involving light. As of 2020, a search in the Web of Science with the words “excited states” and “theory” returned almost 30 000 hits, of which half are just from the last ten years! It is for this reason, that we considered it appropriate to bring this book to light(!), introducing advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and interested researchers to the many flavors in which the field has developed so far.

The book was born with the ambition to collect most of the computational methods that exist today able to solve first the time-independent and then the time-dependent Schrödinger equation for electronic excited states. Accordingly, after an introductory chapter dealing with basic concepts, the book is divided into two parts. Part I contains 9 chapters dealing with electronic structure theory, i.e., solving the time-independent Schrödinger equation and creating building blocks to be used in subsequent dynamics simulations. Part II is divided in 10 chapters devoted to the dynamics of molecules, i.e., solving the time-dependent equation. The solution to the former equation provides energies and other properties, of the electronic excited states in a static manner. It provides multidimensional potential energy surfaces and the corresponding wave functions associated to a particular geometry, which allow molecular spectroscopical properties to be computed. The latter

equation delivers a complementary picture of the system, being in motion, indulging time scales and predicting branching ratios. The richness and broadness of the book invites the reader to reflect on which method could be suitable for a particular problem. We hope that this book fills a gap in the theoretical and computational community dealing with light–matter interactions and becomes a guide in hand, as well as a reference for scientists in the field.

From basic theoretical foundations to the latest theoretical developments, every chapter is self-contained and encompasses the fundamental ideas behind a particular method, its strengths and limitations, as well as selected applications. The chapters are written with the aim to be understandable by master students and newcomers to the field while also informing experts about the state-of-the-art in the field.

Last but not least, we want to express our warm gratitude to all the authors who gracefully accepted the invitation to be part of this adventure, for their enthusiasm, patience and critical suggestions. We are also thankful to our coworkers, for lively discussions and helpful exchanges, in particular, to Philipp Marquetand, Sebastian Mai, Sandra Gómez, and Ignacio Fernández Galván. Their help was priceless.

Leticia González (Vienna)

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1

Motivation and Basic Concepts

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Abstract

This chapter describes what electronic excited states are and why they are important to study and therefore motivates the need for theoretical tools able to characterize them. Further and most importantly, in this introductory chapter, we put together in a comprehensive manner a collection of basic concepts that might be needed, depending on the background of the reader, to understand the remaining chapters of this book.

1.1 Mission and Motivation

When a photon of light strikes a molecule, the latter's electrons are promoted from the electronic ground state to higher electronic levels. Typically, the electronic ground state of a molecule is a singlet state, but depending on the number of electrons and their most favorable way of pairing, it can be a doublet, a triplet, or a state of higher multiplicity. Assuming the electronic ground state is a singlet, upon light absorption the molecule will be excited to another singlet state, as high in energy as the energy contained in the photon allows. Once excited, a number of radiative and non-radiative decay processes are possible. These are collected in the Jabłoński diagram shown in Figure 1.1(a), which assumes an electronic singlet ground state.

Radiative processes include fluorescence or phosphorescence, depending on whether the emission of light involves a transition between two states of the same multiplicity, for example from the lowest singlet S_1 to the S_0 , or involves a change of spin, as shown in Figure 1.1, from the triplet T_1 to the S_0 . Typically, as in the example depicted, the emitted light has a longer wavelength than the absorbed radiation because luminescence occurs from lower energy levels, and thus absorption and emission spectra are easy to identify from experimental data. In this example, the molecule returns to the original ground state from where it started and thus there was no photochemical reaction, one would say that a photophysical process has taken place.

Non-radiative processes can be much more complicated to observe experimentally, as they typically involve not only the bright or absorbing state defined by the wavelength employed to irradiate, but also dark states, i.e., states that do not have a significant oscillator strength but are populated from the bright states. A transition between electronic states of the same multiplicity is known as

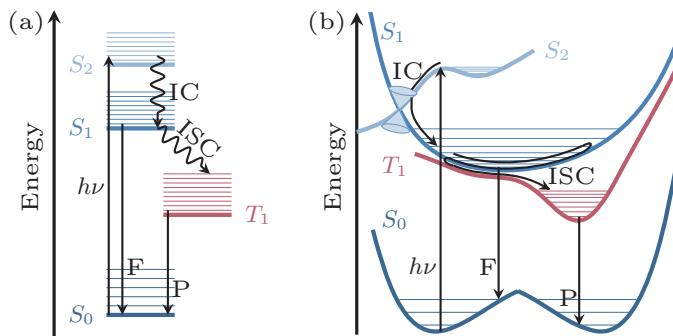


Figure 1.1 (a) Jabłoński diagram with levels. After absorption of a photon with energy $h\nu$, different processes can occur: radiative processes are fluorescence (F) and phosphorescence (P), non-radiative processes are internal conversion (IC) and intersystem crossing (ISC). (b) Jabłoński diagram with potential energy surfaces.

internal conversion, e.g., from S_2 to S_1 . When two states of different multiplicities are involved, e.g., from the S_1 to T_1 , one speaks of intersystem crossing.

The electronic levels of a molecule are defined through potential energy surfaces (PES) that extend along $3N - 6$ dimensions (with N the number of atoms contained in the molecule). PES are the direct consequence of invoking the Born–Oppenheimer approximation (BOA), see section 1.7. As comfortable as it might seem for a chemist to employ electronic states to envision the course of a chemical reaction from a reactant to a product, sticking to the BOA when talking about electronic excited states implies that the coupling between different PES is neglected. However, these so-called *non-adiabatic couplings* between PES are the “salt and pepper” of photochemistry, as they are essential to understand which states and geometrical conformations are populated after excitation. One key concept in this respect is the non-adiabatic transition around a *conical intersection*, see section 1.9. Named after the ideal topology two PES adopt when they intersect (see Figure 1.1(b)), a conical intersection is the molecular funnel that allows for internal conversion, and it can also be seen as the transition state in photochemistry, which connects a reactant with a product. Likewise, intersystem crossing is mediated by spin–orbit coupling, which is another form of vibronic or non-adiabatic coupling between electronic levels.

Figure 1.1(b) summarizes the radiative and non-radiative processes described before, now in terms of PES. If after the detour via the different PES, the molecule ends up at a different geometrical configuration from which it started after irradiation, one speaks of a photochemical reaction; if instead, it returns back to the electronic ground state of the reactant, the term photophysics is employed.

Be it photophysics or photochemistry, light-induced processes are all around us. As Ciamician already recognized in 1912¹, “reactions caused by light are so many, that it should not be difficult to find some of practical value”. Indeed, just to give one representative example, the dream of using solar fuel to produce sustainable energy is keeping many scientists around the world busy. In an effort to mimic natural photosynthesis, one needs among others, to design efficient antenna complexes able to harvest the broad solar spectrum and direct the electrons towards the catalytic centers. This design requires a profound understanding of the underlying processes that take place in the molecules after light excitation. Theoretical modeling can help explain existing experiments and hopefully guide new ones. Which are the electronic states that are populated after

¹ Giacomo Ciamician, “The photochemistry of the future”, *Science* 36 (1912) 385–394.

excitation? How does the molecule evolve along the complicated PES associated to these electronic states? Often these two simple questions are not easy to answer. They imply a need to get an accurate solution of two key equations, the electronic time-independent Schrödinger equation and the time-dependent Schrödinger equation. Both equations are challenging to solve, except for very small molecules, and so approximations and numerical strategies are required. The solution of the first equation is the goal of electronic structure theory and the solution of the second, the target of chemical dynamics. Both fields have tremendously evolved in the last decades, with the emergence of many different methods that have a common objective.

The mission of this book is to keep up-to-date with the recent development in these two intertwined fields, setting the focus at solving electronic excited states and following their time evolution. Accordingly, Part I collects the most important electronic structure methods that can be used nowadays to calculate electronic excited states as well as associated PES and other electronic properties. Part II, in turn, covers the state of the art for solving molecular motion in the electronic excited states. The variety and extension of the methods collected in this book speaks for itself about how much progress has been achieved in this branch of theoretical chemistry, which undoubtedly has also massively profited in the last years from enormous advances in computational resources. It would not be fair, however, to pretend that theoretical photochemistry has reached its cusp. A deeper reading of the chapters will reveal to the reader not only how far we have come but also how much still remains to be done.

In an effort to make the contents of this book accessible to undergraduates and newcomers to the field, the rest of this chapter contains a number of basic concepts to ease the reading. All the chapters have been written in a fully consistent manner, so as to allow them to be studied independently from the others. The chapters are, nevertheless, organized such that they try to reflect a natural progression. In this respect, the chapters are grouped in two sections consisting of Part I and Part II – electronic structure theory and methods for molecular dynamics, respectively.

In the electronic structure section the selected order of the chapters tries, to some extent, to be in the order of sophistication. However, in some cases chapters are clustered together because of common grounds or methodology. In that sense, Part I starts with the chapters based on density functional theory (DFT) – the chapters on time-dependent DFT (TD-DFT) and multi-configuration DFT (MC-DFT). This is followed by chapters revolving around equation-of-motion coupled cluster theory (EOM-CC) and the algebraic-diagrammatic construction (ADC) scheme for the polarization propagator, which are grouped together due to the technical similarities of the methods. Finally, five chapters are grouped together based on the use of a configurational interaction (CI) type of wave function. Initially, the basics of the so-called complete active space SCF (CASSCF) and related methods – the foundation of multi-configuration quantum chemistry – is introduced. This is followed by two chapters on techniques describing how to solve the associated equations – the chapters on density matrix renormalization group (DMRG) and the quantum Monte-Carlo (QMC) approaches. To conclude Part I, two chapters about the inclusion of electronic dynamical correlation follow – the chapters on the multi-reference configuration interaction (MRCI) method and the multi-configuration reference perturbation theory (MRPT). A pictorial summary of the methods described is provided in Figure 1.2. Starting from Hartree–Fock (HF), different methods cover different degrees of dynamic and static correlation, all the way to the exact full-CI (FCI).

Part II, dealing with the time evolution of nuclear configurations, starts with three chapters that can be considered within the realm of quantum dynamics. The first one introduces the time-dependent Schrödinger equation and how to solve it exactly in a grid – what is known as wave packet dynamics. Due to the cost of obtaining PES, wave packet dynamics is typically done in reduced dimensionality. The multi-configuration time-dependent Hartree (MCTDH) family of

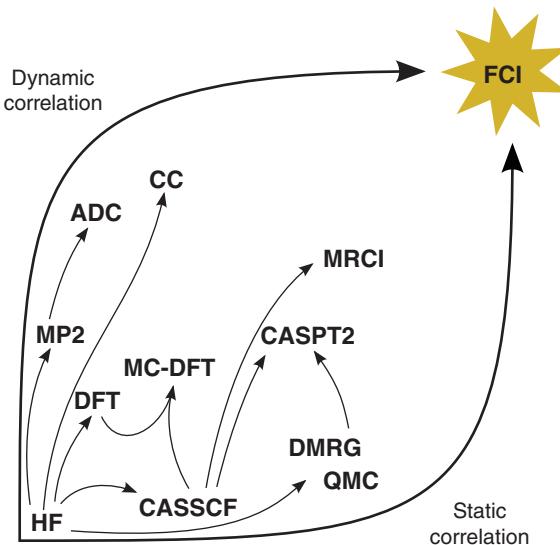


Figure 1.2 Scheme of quantum chemical methods for electronic structure. The lower left corner contains the most basic *ab initio* method, Hartree–Fock (HF), while the exact solution of the time-independent Schrödinger equation, full configuration interaction (FCI), lies, mostly unreachable, on the upper right corner. A panoply of methods described in Part I of this book, identified by their acronyms, try to “correct” HF, adding the missing *electronic correlation* and thus approximating the ideal FCI. The methods are arranged, qualitatively, based on their algorithmic relations and their prioritization of so-called *static* or *dynamic* correlation, which ultimately lead to the same end point.

methods is presented next, as a method that can alleviate in part the cost of grid-based wave packet methodologies. This chapter ends, bridging with the next block of four chapters that are based on quantum-mechanical and quantum-classical methods using on-the-fly computation of PES. These chapters are arranged in sort of going from more to less “quantum” – direct dynamics variational multi-configuration Gaussian (DD-vMCG) method, full and *ab initio* multiple spawning (FMS and AIMS), Ehrenfest methods, and surface hopping (SH). The next four chapters are based on alternative formulations of quantum dynamics. Exact factorization is based on an alternative way to express the electronic–nuclear wave function, Bohmian dynamics is based on wave theory, while semi-classical and path integral methods are based on Feynman’s path integral formulation. Figure 1.3 illustrates pictorially the dynamical methods explained here.

Given the diversity of methods and authors it is unavoidable that every chapter follows its own writing style. For that reason, we considered it useful to collect here some underlying mathematical background, assuming basic knowledge of quantum mechanics, as well as a few photochemical concepts, that naturally arise in many chapters.

1.2 Atomic Units

A comment on atomic units is in order here. Hartree atomic units can elegantly simplify equations by setting to 1 the numerical value of some fundamental constants. Typical examples are the mass of the electron m_e , the electron charge e , the Coulomb or electric force constant $k_e = \frac{1}{4\pi\epsilon_0}$ and the reduced Plank constant $\hbar = \frac{h}{2\pi}$. Other useful constants used as units, derived from those fundamental quantities and used in this book are the bohr, $a_0 \approx 0.529 \text{ \AA}$, and the hartree, $E_h \approx 27.21 \text{ eV}$.